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ABSTRACT

Looking at Binge Drinking (LBD) is a software program designed for school administrators and prevention specialists based at four-year colleges and universities who are concerned about the rate of alcohol binge drinking among their students. LBD runs on personal computers using Microsoft Windows. School officials can explore how certain changes in their school or student body might be expected to affect the rate of binge drinking at the school by varying the basic data entered into the program. In each case, LBD will apply the information to the statistical model and generate a new estimate. At the user's option, LBD will generate a 1-page report of the information. This guide to the LBD software includes the following information: (1) who should use it; (2) ways to use it; (3) the rationale for it; (4) the theory behind it; (5) what is needed to use it; (6) how to install it; (7) how to enter it; and (8) how to operate it. Sample screens illustrate the software's operation. A list of other publications and resources are included, and appendices present the methodology for the 1993 college alcohol study by Harvard School of Public Health, and a school profile worksheet. (MAH)

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Looking at Binge Drinking at Four-Year Colleges:

Software User's Guide

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Looking at Binge Drinking at Four-Year Colleges:

Software User's Guide

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Looking at Binge Drinking at Four-Year Colleges: Software User's Guide

Who Should Use *Looking at Binge Drinking*?

Looking at Binge Drinking (LBD) is designed for school administrators and prevention specialists based at *four-year colleges and universities* who are concerned about the rate of alcohol binge drinking among their students.

The rate of binge drinking among students is a crucial index, one customarily used by researchers to assess how much heavy or problem drinking is occurring on college campuses.

If you work at a two-year college, *LBD* might give you misleading information, since the statistical data used in the program come from a national survey that included only four-year institutions.

How Can You Use *Looking at Binge Drinking*?

There are two ways you can use *LBD*:

- Based on information about your school and its student body, *LBD* will estimate the rate of binge drinking at your college. At your option, *LBD* will issue a one-page report of this information.
- With *LBD* you can explore how certain changes in your school or student body (e.g., percentage of male versus female students, presence versus absence of fraternities or sororities) might be expected to affect the rate of binge drinking found at your school.

Caution

Looking at Binge Drinking *is based on national survey data collected by the Harvard School of Public Health in 1993. The accuracy of the program's predictions may decline with each passing year as campus conditions change.*

What Is the Rationale for *Looking at Binge Drinking*?

LBD is based on statistical data from a national survey of college student drinking conducted in 1993 by the Harvard School of Public Health. With a sample of 17,592 students at 140 four-year colleges and universities, the survey provides data on binge drinking among American college students and a profile of the types of schools and students most prone to alcohol-related problems.

Most studies of drinking by college students have been conducted on single college campuses and have not used a random sample of students. This is the first study of college drinking that uses a representative national sample of both colleges and individual students. As a result, the data from the study can be applied to all American four-year colleges, thereby providing a national portrait of student drinking behavior. (An overview of the survey methodology appears in Appendix A.)

According to the survey, *44 percent* of students at four-year colleges and universities in 1993 engaged in binge drinking at least once during the two weeks prior to the survey. For men, binge drinking is defined as having

five or more drinks in a row, and for women as having *four* or more drinks in a row (see the box, *Assessing Binge Drinking*). Among men, 50 percent were binge drinkers; among women, the figure was 39 percent.

The extent of binge drinking varied widely among colleges, from a low of one percent of students to a high of 70 percent. At almost one-third of the colleges, more than half the students were binge drinkers during the two weeks prior to the survey.

One reason for this wide variation in rates is that the student bodies at the colleges are different, and certain types of students are more likely to be binge drinkers than others. For example, the Harvard study showed that white students were nearly 2.4 times more likely to be binge drinkers than were nonwhite students. Thus, all other things being equal, schools with a higher percentage of white students would be expected to have a greater number of binge drinkers.

The implication of this finding is clear: **An individual four-year college should not compare its binge drinking rates to overall national averages without taking into account the nature of the school and its student body.** Providing a mechanism to do this is the basic rationale for *Looking at Binge Drinking*.

Assessing Binge Drinking

Harvard's College Alcohol Study used two questions to assess binge drinking:

1) *Think back over the **last two weeks**. How many times have you had five or more drinks in a row?*

2) *During the **last two weeks**, how many times have you had four or more drinks in a row (but no more than that)?*

The response options for both questions are: none, once, twice, 3 to 5 times, 6 to 9 times, and 10 or more times.

A "drink" was defined as a 12-ounce can or bottle of beer, a 12-ounce can or bottle of wine cooler, a four-ounce glass of wine, or a shot of liquor, either straight or in a mixed drink.

What Is the Theory behind *Looking at Binge Drinking*?

Using data from the Harvard survey, several school and student body characteristics were identified (e.g., urban/suburban versus small town/rural setting, percentage of students who have never married) that can be used to predict the level of binge drinking at four-year colleges. *LBD* calls for you to fill in information about the characteristics of your school, applies that information to a statistical model, and then gives you an estimate of what your school's binge drinking rate might be.

The *LBD* estimate is just that—an estimate. It is very unlikely that the estimated binge drinking rate is exactly the same as the true rate. For that reason, *LBD* also generates a *range estimate* within which the true binge drinking rate would be expected to fall. *LBD* bases the range estimate on what statisticians call a "95 percent confidence interval." The width of the range estimate will vary depending on a school's particular characteristics.

Consider this example for the fictitious Finn College. Suppose that *LBD* predicts that 38 percent of the students at Finn are binge drinkers, with a predicted range between 32 and 44 percent. In this case, the 95 percent confidence interval is plus or minus six percent. By this estimate, we can say there is 95 percent probability that the true binge drinking rate at Finn falls between 32 and 44 percent. We can also say there is a five percent probability that the true binge drinking rate falls outside this predicted range (i.e., is either less than 32 percent or greater than 44 percent).

Now suppose that officials at Finn College select a random sample of students for a survey, and suppose that it shows a measured binge drinking rate of 45 percent. Based on data from the Harvard survey, and based on Finn's particular characteristics, *LBD* told school officials to expect a binge drinking rate of 38 percent. The measured rate is much higher. Indeed, it falls outside the predicted range of 32 to 44 percent. Should Finn College officials be worried?

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There are two possibilities to consider. The first is that Finn's true binge drinking rate really is higher than the national standard, as expressed through the *LBD* prediction. In this case, there could be something going on at Finn that puts its binge drinking rate at a higher level than would be expected. What that "something" might be would be impossible to know without further study.

The second possibility is that the measured binge rate is this extreme because of chance. Even if the true binge drinking rate at Finn were 38 percent, the value predicted by *LBD*, it would still be possible by chance alone for school officials to draw a random sample of students who drink a lot of alcohol and thus report a binge drinking rate greater than 44 percent. In this example, with a 95 percent confidence limit of plus or minus six percent, the theoretical probability of drawing a student sample that produces a measured rate greater than 44 percent, by chance alone, is 2.5 percent (one half of five percent).

If a different random sample of students was drawn, the students might report a far lower binge drinking rate. Most likely, this rate would be relatively close to the true value of 38 percent. But there is even a chance it could go below 32 percent, the lower end of the predicted range. The theoretical probability of finding a measured rate of 32 percent or less, by chance alone, is also 2.5 percent.

Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to determine which of these two possible explanations is correct. Maybe the true binge drinking rate at Finn is 38 percent, and the reported rate of 45 percent is due to chance. Alternatively, maybe the true binge drinking rate at Finn really is higher than 38 percent, and the *LBD* prediction is an underestimate.

How do we deal with this uncertainty? This is where the 95 percent confidence interval reported by *LBD* is important. If a school's measured binge drinking rate falls within the 95 percent confidence interval that defines the range estimate, we say that the measured rate conforms to the *LBD* prediction. If the measured rate falls outside the range estimate, we say that the measured rate does not conform to the *LBD* prediction. In the latter case, however, we must accept a five percent (or one in 20) chance that this assertion is wrong and that the *true* binge drinking rate actually does conform to the *LBD* prediction and therefore to the statistical model that was derived from the 1993 national survey.

Note

You can explore how certain changes in your school or student body might be expected to affect the rate of binge drinking found at your school by varying the basic data that you enter into the program. In each case, LBD will apply the information to the statistical model and generate a new estimate.

What Do You Need to Use *Looking at Binge Drinking*?

LBD is designed to run on an **IBM-compatible personal computer** using **Microsoft Windows** (version 3.0 or higher). The software is available on a **3.5-inch diskette**.

If your computer uses 5.25-inch "floppy" diskettes, and if you are unable to make a copy of *LBD* using another computer, please contact The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention for assistance (see *Resources* on page 7).

How to Install *Looking at Binge Drinking*

These instructions assume that you are familiar with Microsoft Windows.

First, turn your computer on and make sure you are in Windows. Put the *LBD* diskette into the 3.5-inch disk drive.

Call up the Window's "Program Manager" and select the menu under "File." Select "Run."

Type "**a:setup**" and click once on "O.K." (or simply press "Enter"). If you get a message saying, "Not ready on drive A," try typing "**b:setup**."

You will get a message saying that this program will be loaded into a directory called "c:\binge." You can put the program into another directory if you wish by typing in the name of that other directory (e.g., c:\LBD).

When the program has been loaded on your computer, you will return to the Window's "Program Manager." You

will see several icons, one of which is labeled "BINGE." If you do not see this icon, the program is not installed on your computer.

How to Enter *Looking at Binge Drinking*

Double click on the BINGE icon. You will next see a box with an icon that looks like a sun, also labeled "BINGE." Using the mouse, double click on the icon to call up *LBD*.

The program's **title screen** provides addresses for both The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention and The Sackman Group.

Move the cursor to "Continue" and click once. If you see "Your School Profile" at the top of the screen, you have entered the program successfully.

To exit the program from this screen without continuing, move the cursor to "Cancel" in the top right corner and click once.

How to Operate *Looking at Binge Drinking*

LBD is organized as a series of screens (similar to the pages of a book). The following are some general rules for moving around on each screen and in between screens:

1. To **make a selection**, use the mouse to move the cursor to the desired choice and click once.
2. To **advance to the next space** on a screen, use the tab key.
3. To **back up to the previous space**, hold down the shift key and press the tab key.
4. To **go to the next screen**, move the cursor to "Next Screen" at the top right of the screen and click once.
5. To **go to the previous screen**, move the cursor to "Previous Screen" at the top right of the screen and click once.

Screen 1: Your School Profile

The first step to getting an estimate of the binge drinking rate at your college is to complete a school profile. The elements of that profile are listed in table 1. The information in the profile is entered into the *LBD*'s statistical model to generate the estimate.

Why is this particular information requested? Statistical analysis of the Harvard national survey showed that this set of information (using the indicated response alternatives) would lead to the best predictions of school binge drinking rates. Other factors, such as region of the country, were excluded because they did not result in better predictions.

There is a **worksheet** in Appendix B that you can photocopy and use if you need to collect the data requested before using the program.

Multiple Choice. The first seven items in the school profile call for information about your school using a multiple choice format.

1. You will notice that each item has a **default** option, as indicated by the **black dot** in the circle next to it. If this is the appropriate choice for your school, you can leave it as is.
2. To select one of the other choices, move the cursor to the correct option and click once. (You may click on either the white circle or the words that describe the option.) Check to be sure the black dot is next to the desired choice.
3. You can change an answer at any time. Move the cursor to the correct answer and click once.
4. If you do not know the competitive rating of your school (item 5) according to *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges* (Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1992), then you can estimate the school's rating based on your assessment of its relative competitiveness.
5. You may not leave any of the items unanswered. If you skip over an item, *LBD* will enter the default option as part of your school profile.

Fill in the Blank. The remaining five items ask you to report the percentage of undergraduates who fall in a certain category.

1. Move the cursor to the white box where you want to type and click once. You should see the cursor, now a small vertical line, blinking in that box.

2. Type in the correct percentage for each requested item. Type the **number only** without the "%" symbol. Press the tab key to move the cursor to each successive box.

3. You can change a previous answer at any time. First, hold down the shift key and press the tab key until you have returned to the answer you want to change. (Alternatively, use the mouse to move the cursor to the *end* of the answer you want to change and click once.) Next, use the backspace key to remove the answer, and then type in the new answer.

When you have completed each entry and are satisfied with your answers, you are ready to advance to the next screen. Move the cursor (now an arrow) to the box in the upper right corner that says "O.K." and click once.

There are two circumstances under which *LBD* will not allow you to move to the next screen:

1. You entered a percentage value that falls outside the range allowed by the program's statistical model. The valid ranges for the school profile entries are displayed in table 2.

2. You failed to answer one of the fill-in-the-blank items.

If you have entered a percentage value that falls outside the valid range and then attempt to advance to the next screen, you will get the following message:

Bounds Error

The percentage value you have entered for [variable name] is beyond the range for which our mathematical formula is valid. [Valid range: x% to y%]

You cannot advance to the next screen until you have entered a value that is within the range specified by the program.

To clear the "Bounds Error" message, click on "O.K." or press "Enter."

Check the percentage value you entered to see if it is correct. If the value you entered is wrong, move the cursor to that box, delete the incorrect answer and fill in the

Table 1: Information Required for Your School Profile

Multiple Choice

- *Is your school **public** or **private**?*
- *Is your school a **commuter school** (90 percent or more students commute)?*
- *Is your school a **historically black college** (80 percent or more black students)?*
- *What is the **undergraduate enrollment** at your school?*
- *What is the **competitive rating** of your school according to* Barron's Profiles of American Colleges *(Hauppauge, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1992)?*
- *In what **type of setting** (urban/suburban or small town/rural) is your school located?*
- *Are there **fraternities or sororities** on campus?*

Fill in the Blank

- ***Age**: percentage of undergraduates 17-23 years old*
- ***Sex**: percentage of male undergraduates*
- ***Marital status**: percentage of single (never married) undergraduates*
- ***Student housing**: percentage of undergraduates who live in either a coed dorm* or *a fraternity/sorority house*
- ***Work for pay**: percentage of undergraduates who work for pay either part time or full time*

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Table 2: Valid Ranges for School Profile Entries

Entry	Valid Range (Percent)
Age (percent age 17-23)	27-100
Sex (percent males)	0-82
Marital status (percent never married)	52-100
Student housing (percent coed dorm or fraternity/sorority)	0-84
Work for pay (percent working)	23-86

[a] See table 1 for a description of the school profile entries.

correct answer.

If the value you entered is correct, but *LBD* says it falls outside the valid range, change your answer to the closest value that is within the valid range.

For example, suppose you indicated that 20 percent of your students work either full or part time for pay, a value that falls outside the valid range of 23 to 86 percent. You should change your answer to 23 percent, the smallest value that *LBD* will accept.

If you failed to complete one of the fill-in-the-blank items and then attempt to advance to the next screen, you will get the following message:

Warning

You have left one or more fields blank on this screen. We will default to the national average for those fields.

If the omission was a mistake, move the cursor to "Cancel" and click once to return to Screen 1, "Your School Profile." You can now enter the missing percentage values. After that, you can go to Screen 2 by clicking on "O.K." in the upper right corner.

If you do not know the missing information, you can enter an estimate. If you are more comfortable working with a range of estimates, run *LBD* once using the low end of the range and then repeat it using the high end.

For example, suppose you do not know exactly what percentage of your students have never been married, but you think it is between 80 and 90 percent. Run *LBD* using the 80 percent figure, then repeat the procedure using 90 percent.

If you do not want to enter an estimate, you can move the cursor to "O.K." and click once to go to Screen 2. If you do this, *LBD* will use the *national average* for that item in order to calculate the binge drinking rate estimate.

Please note that each national average you use will make the estimate for your school less precise. This is especially the case when the true value for your school differs greatly from the national average.

Screen 2: Binge Drinking Estimate

If you want to return to Screen 1, use the mouse to move the cursor to "Previous Screen" and click once.

Screen 2 has three sections:

- Binge Drinking: A Definition
- Your School Profile
- Your Binge Drinking Estimate

Binge Drinking: A Definition. The first section of Screen 2 reminds you how binge drinking is defined. For men it is having *five* or more drinks in a row in the last two weeks, and for women it is *four* or more drinks in a row.

Your School Profile. This section recaps the information you entered about your school. If you want to make a correction, use the mouse to select "Previous Screen."

Your Binge Drinking Estimate. The bottom third of the screen shows the binge drinking estimate calculated for your school, based on your school profile. As described previously, *LBD* also provides a range estimate based on a 95 percent confidence interval.

For example, suppose that *LBD* estimates your school's binge drinking rate at 44 percent, with a 95 percent confidence interval of plus or minus four percent. This means that, according to the statistical model based on Harvard's national survey, you can be 95 percent certain that the binge drinking rate at your school falls between 40 and 48 percent.

When you have reviewed the information on Screen 2, use the mouse to select "Next Screen" in the upper right corner.

Screen 3: Printing a Summary Report

To return to the previous screen, use the mouse to select "Previous Screen."

Screen 3 summarizes the *LBD* results you have already seen. If you do not want a printed summary report, use the mouse to select "Done" and exit *LBD*. Alternatively, you can go back to previous screens and reuse the program.

To print a summary report, use the mouse to select "Print Report," which appears in the upper right corner.

A box will appear for you to type in your school's name. You must make an entry in this box in order for your report to be printed.

After you have typed in your school's name, click on "O.K." A message will tell you that your report has been sent to the printer. To clear this message, click on "O.K." or press "Enter."

Your printed report will have three sections:

- the gender-specific definition of binge drinking;
- your school's profile (the information you entered); and
- the percentage of your students estimated by *LBD* to be binge drinkers, including the range estimate based on the 95 percent confidence interval.

After you have printed your report, you can exit the program by using the mouse to select "Done." Alternatively, you can go back to previous screens to reuse the program.

Resources

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention is a national resource center established by the U.S. Department of Education and managed by Education Development Center, Inc., in Newton, Massachusetts.

The Center's goal is to assist colleges and universities as they work to change campus cultures, foster environments that promote healthy lifestyles, and prevent student alcohol and other drug abuse.

The Center offers five types of services: 1) information services; 2) technical assistance; 3) training; 4) national meetings; and 5) publications.

These services are available to all institutions of higher education free of charge. For additional information, contact the Center at the following address:

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol
and Other Drug Prevention
William DeJong, Center Director
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02158-1060

e-mail: HigherEdCtr@edc.org
gopher site: gopher.hec.org 7006
Telephone: (617) 969-7100
Toll-free: (800) 676-1730
Fax: (617) 969-5979

Publications of the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention

Student Flyer

Alcohol and Acquaintance Rape: Strategies to Protect Yourself and Each Other

Guides

Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Acquaintance Rape

Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Impaired Driving

Bulletins

Binge Drinking on Campus: Results of a National Study

Enforcing the Minimum Age Drinking Law: A Survey of College Administrators and Security Chiefs

Institutionalizing an Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Program

Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Vandalism

Newsletter

Catalyst

An electronic version of these publications can be downloaded from the electronic bulletin board system for the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), PREVline (PREVention online), which is operated by the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information. PREVline can be accessed via the Internet (path: telnet ncadi.health.org; then press the "enter" key; user-ID: new) or by direct dial-up [telephone (301) 770-0850, user-ID: new]. This file and others can be located by conducting a keyword search on The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention publications in the online library.

For more information, contact the U.S. Department of Education, Drug Prevention Program, FIPSE, ROB 3, 7th and D Streets, S.W., Washington, DC-20202-5175.

Other Publications

The following publications are recommended for obtaining additional information on student binge drinking, assessing alcohol-related problems on campus, and developing new policies to change the social, legal, and economic environment in which students make decisions about their drinking behavior:

Eigen, L.D. *Alcohol Practices, Policies, and Potentials of American Colleges and Universities: An OSAP White Paper*. Rockville, Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1991. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, Maryland 20847.

Presley, C.A., Meilman, P.W., and Lyerla, R. *Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses: Use, Consequences, and Perceptions of the Campus Environment*. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University, Core Institute, 1993. Available through the CORE Institute, Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

Presley, C.A., Harrold, R., Scouten, E., Lyerla, R., and Meilman, P.W. *Core Alcohol and Drug Survey: User's Manual* (5th edition). Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University, 1994. Available through the CORE Institute, Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

Ryan, B.E., Colthurst, T., and Segars, L. *College Alcohol Risk Assessment Guide*. San Diego, California: University of California at San Diego, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Studies, UCSD Extension, 1994. Available from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, Maryland 20847.

Appendix A

Methodology for the College Alcohol Study by Harvard School of Public Health (1993)

Selection of Schools

The Harvard team initially selected a random sample of 179 four-year colleges and universities.

Nine of these schools—including seminaries, military schools, and allied health schools—were considered inappropriate for the study and were dropped from the sample.

Ten women's colleges and 15 schools with fewer than 1,000 students were then added to the sample to ensure that such schools were sufficiently represented.

Ultimately, 140 schools (72 percent of the final sample of 195) agreed to participate and to draw a random sample of their students in accordance with the research team's requirements.

The participating schools are located in 40 states and the District of Columbia.

Selection of Students

Random samples of students at each school were mailed a self-administered questionnaire, with a total sample of 28,709.

A total of 3,082 students were dropped from the sample due to school reports of incorrect addresses, withdrawals from school, or leaves of absence.

A total of 17,592 students returned the questionnaires, for a response rate of 69 percent.

The student sample included more women (58 percent) than men (42 percent), in part due to the addition of women's colleges to the sample.

The sample was predominantly white (81 percent). Minority representation was as follows:

African American, 6 percent

Asian/Pacific Islander, 7 percent

Hispanic, 7 percent

Native American, 1 percent

Other, 6 percent

Appendix B

School Profile Worksheet

This worksheet is designed to help you collect the information needed for *Looking at Binge Drinking*.

- Is your school **public** or **private**?

  ___ public

  ___ private

- Is your school a **commuter school**?

  ___ yes (≥ 90% of students commute)

  ___ no (< 90% of students commute)

- Is your school a **historically black college**?

  ___ yes (≥ 80% black students)

  ___ no (< 80% black students)

- What is the **undergraduate enrollment** at your school?

  ___ < 1,000 students

  ___ 1,001 - 5,000 students

  ___ 5,001 - 10,000 students

  ___ < 10,000 students

- What is the **competitive rating** of your school according to *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*?

  ___ least competitive (original rating of 1 or 2)

  ___ moderately competitive (3 or 4)

  ___ very competitive (5, 6, 7 or 8)

- In what **type of setting** is your school located?

  ___ urban or suburban

  ___ small town or rural

- Are there **fraternities or sororities** on campus?

  ___ yes ___ no

- **Age**: percentage of undergraduates 17-23 years old ___ %

- **Sex**: percentage of male undergraduates ___ %

- **Marital status**: percentage of single (never married) undergraduates ___ %

- **Student housing**: percentage of undergraduates who live in either a coed dorm *or* a fraternity or sorority house ___ %

- **Work for pay**: percentage of undergraduates who work for pay either part-time or full-time ___ %